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IN THE

# Supreme Court of the United States

OCTOBER TERM, 1980

No.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, *ex rel.* JOEL D. JOSEPH,
AND
JOEL D. JOSEPH,
*Petitioners,*

*v.*

HOWARD W. CANNON, *et al.*
*Respondents.*

## PETITION FOR A WRIT OF CERTIORARI TO THE UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA CIRCUIT

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## PETITION FOR A WRIT OF CERTIORARI TO THE UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA CIRCUIT

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Petitioners respectfully request that a writ of certiorari issue to review the decision of the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit entered in this proceeding on January 30, 1981.

## OPINION BELOW

The opinion of the Court of Appeals has not been reproduced and is reproduced as Appendix A. The Court of Appeals denied petitioners' motion for a rehearing and suggestion for rehearing *en banc* on March 2, 1981. The order of the United States District Court for the District of Columbia has not been reported and is reproduced as Appendix B, App. 29 a.

## JURISDICTION

The motion for rehearing was denied on March 2, 1981, and this petition for a writ of certiorari was filed within 90 days of the denial of the motion for a rehearing. Jurisdiction of this court is invoked under 28 U.S.C. §1254(1).

## QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Is a case justiciable when the claim alleges that a Member of Congress used a member of his federally funded legislative staff exclusively on re-election activities?

2. Is a Congressman immune from suit under the False Claims Act, 31 U.S.C.§231, *et seq.*, which alleges that the Congressman directed a member of his legislative staff to work exclusively on his re-election campaign?

## STATUTORY PROVISIONS INVOLVED

### THE FALSE CLAIMS ACT

31 USC §231. Liability of persons making false claims.

Any person not in the military or naval forces of the United States, or in the militia called into or actually employed in the service of the United States, who shall do or commit any of the acts prohibited by any of the provisions of section fifty-four hundred and thirty-eight, Title "CRIMES," shall forfeit and pay to the United States the sum of two thousand dollars, and, in addition, double the amount of damages which the United States may have sustained by reason of the doing or committing such act, together with the costs of suit; and such forfeiture and damages shall be sued for in the same suit.

"Section fifty-four hundred and thirty-eight referred to in this section is R. S. §5438, which read:

Every person who makes or causes to be made, or causes to be presented, for payment or approval, to or by any person or officer in the civil, military, or naval service of the United States, or any department or officer thereof, knowing such claim to be false, fictitious, or fraudlent, or who, for the purpose of obtaining or aiding to obtain the payment or approval of such claim, makes, uses, or causes to be made or used, any false bill, receipt, voucher, roll, account, claim certificate, affidavit, or deposition, knowing the same to contain any fraudulent or fictitious statement or entry, or who enters into any agreement, combination, or conspiracy to defraud the Government of the United States, or any department or officer thereof, by obtaining or aiding to obtain the payment or allowance of any false or fraudulent claim, or who, having charge, possession custody, or control of any money or other public property used or to be used in

the military or naval service, who, with intent to defraud the United States or willfully to conceal such money or other property, delivers or causes to be delivered, to any other person having authority to receive the same, any amount of such money or other property less than that for which he received a certificate or took a receipt, and every person authorized to make or deliver any certificate, voucher, receipt, or other paper certifying the receipt of arms, ammunition, provisions, clothing, or other property fo used or to be used, who makes or delivers the same to any other person without a full knowledge of the truth of the facts stated therein, and with intent to defraud the United States, and every person who knowingly purchases or receives in pledge for any obligation or indebtedness from any soldier, officer, sailor, or other person called into or employed in the military or naval service any arms, equipments, ammunition, clothes, military stores, or other public property, such soldier, sailor, officer, or other person so offending in any of the matters set forth in this section shall be imprisoned at hard labor for not less than one nor more than five years, or fined not less than one thousand nor more than five thousand dollars."

§232. Suits; procedure for private claims

(A) Jurisdiction. The several district courts of the United States, (the United States District Court for the District of Columbia,) the several district courts of the territories of the United States,

whose jurisdictional limits the person doing or committing such act shall be found, shall wheresoever such act may have been done or committed, have full power and jurisdiction to hear, try and determine such suit.

(B) Persons capable of bringing suit. Except as hereinafter provided, such suit may be brought and carried on by any person, as well for himself as for the United States, the same shall be at the sole cost and charge of such person, and shall be in the name of the United States, but shall not be withdrawn or discontinued without the consent, in writing, of the judge of the court and the district attorney (United States attorney), first filed in the case, setting forth their reasons for such consent.

§628. Application of money appropriated.

All sums appropriated for the various branches of expenditure in the public service shall be applied solely to the objects for which they are respectively made, and for no others.

## STATEMENT OF THE CASE

Respondent Howard W. Cannon is a United States Senator from the State of Nevada. At all times relevant to this case, co-respondent Chester B. Sobsey was a Senate employee serving as Senator Cannon's administrative assistant. Petitioner alleged that from March, 1975, through November, 1976, Mr. Sobsey worked "extensively and exclusively" for the Senator's re-election. App. 3a. Throughout this period, the complaint averred "Sobsey accepted his regular pay for services ostensibly performed as Senator Cannon's administrative assistant even though such services were not performed or (were) performed in a perfunctory or nominal manner." App 3a.

Petitioner filed suit under the False Claims Act alleging, *inter alia*, that Senator Cannon authorized payment of Mr. Sobey's federal salary during the period that he worked extensively and exclusively on the Senator's re-election campaign, and that the Senator was aware of the nature of his assistant's activities. App. 2a.

Invoking the False Claims Act, petitioner brought suit against Senator Cannon and Mr. Sobsey in the District for recovery, on behalf of the United States, of double damages allegedly sustained by the Federal Treasury, plus $2000 for each false claim made.

The District Court held that the Government already possessed the information in the complaint, and that for this reason the action was barred by §232 of the Act. App. 29a, 30a. The Court of Appeals stated that the District Court's interpretation was incorrect, but affirmed on other grounds. App. 5a. The Court of Appeals ruled that the case was not justiciable because it found that there is a "complete absence 'of judicially discoverable and manageable standards for resolving' the question of whether Senators may use paid staff members in their campaign activities." App. 12a.

Petitioners invoked the jurisdiction of the District Court under 28 U.S.C. §§1331 and 1345, and 31 U.S.C. §232.

## REASONS FOR GRANTING THE WRIT

The decision of the Court of Appeals significantly undermines the purpose of the False Claims Act to protect the Federal Treasury from raids by those who want to use Federal funds for their own purposes. The Court of Appeals is in effect carving a special exemption in the Act for Congressmen, allowing them to abuse the Federal Treasury for their re-election campaigns.

The Court of Appeals was aware of the shortcomings of its decision. It stated: "we do not, of course, say that Members of Congress or their aides may defraud the Government without subjecting themselves to statutory liabilities." App.24a. But the Court in actuality ruled that Congressmen can defraud the Government with impunity and immunity.

In a nation of laws and not of men, the concept that lawmakers are above the law is repugnant. The Court of Appeals held that Congressmen are above the law and they are free to use Government resources to insure their re-election.

## I. THE DECISION OF THE COURT OF APPEALS IS IN CONFLICT WITH THE SUPREME COURT'S DECISION IN *Baker v. Carr*, 369 U.S. 186 (1962).

Concerning the issue of justiciability and political question the Court of Appeals' decision is in conflict with the Supreme Court's decision in *Baker v. Carr*, 369 U. S. 186 (1962). The Court in *Baker* stated:

> Of course the mere fact that the suit seeks protection of a political right does not mean that it presents a political question.
>
> 369 U.S. at 209

Similarly, just because the defendant or respondents is a United States Senator, does not mean that the case presents a political question and is not justiciable.

*Baker v. Carr, supra*, established criteria for determining whether a case presented a non-justiciable political question:

1. Does the constitution commit the issue to be decided to another branch of government?

2. Are there judicially manageable and discoverable standards for resolving the issues to be decided?

3. Is it impossible to decide the issues presented without an initial policy determination of a kind clearly for non-judicial discretion?

4. Is it impossible for the court to resolve the issue presented without expressing lack of respect due a coordinate branch of government?

The Supreme Court stated: "(u)nless one of these formulations is inextricable from the case at bar, there should be no dismissal for non-justiciability on the ground of a political question's presence." 369 U.S. at 217.

The Court of Appeals recognized the above-described criteria. App. 12a. The Court found that consideration of the first and the fourth criteria did not demonstrate that the case presented a political question. However, the Court held that the Senate have to make an initial policy decision before judicial action is appropriate, and that because the Senate had not made this decision there are no judicially manageable and discoverable standards for resolving the issues presented. App. 22a. Petitioners respectfully contend that the Court of Appeals identified the correct criteria, but applied the criteria incorrectly.

The Court of Appeals recognized:

> It is true that "sums appropriated for the various branches of expenditure in the public service" are statutorily confined "to objects

> for which they are respectively made," and consequently are available "for no others."/48
>
> 48 31 U.S.C. §628 (1976)
> App. 12a, 13a.
> (31 U.S.C. §628 is reproduced *supra*, at page 5).

The Court of Appeals noted that it disagreed with the conclusion of the American Law Division of the Library of Congress that 31 U.S.C. §628 bars public compensation of Congressional staff members for the performance of campaign activities. App. 13a.

While the Senate has been "struggling" with the issue concerning use of staff in political campaigns, App. 14a, it may never issue a "decision." It is not unreasonable to assume that the Senate does not intend to regulate itself and its members. The Senate has no incentive to restrict the campaign activities of staff members. If the Senate does not restrict campaign activities of staff, then Senators will maintain their built-in advantage over challengers.

Congress passed into law 31 U. S. C. §628, providing that appropriated funds only can be used for their intended purpose. It is the business of courts to interpret statutes. The federal courts reasonably could determine, as the American Law Division of the Library of Congress has determined, that the use of Congressional staff for campaign purposes is illegal. Drawing the line between campaign activities and legislative activities may not be easy to do, but courts have drawn similar lines. See *e.g. United Public Workers v. Mitchell*, 330 U.S. 75 (1947).

## II. THERE IS A DIVISION BETWEEN THE CIRCUITS CONCERNING THE JUSTICIABILITY OF CLAIMS AGAINST GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS INVOLVING THE USE OF STAFF FOR CAMPAIGN PURPOSES.

The Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals held that taxpayers-voters presented a justiciable controversy when they challenged the use of patronage employees in political campaigns. *Shakman v. Democratic Organization of Cook County*, 435 F.2d 267 (1970). The Court in *Shakman* stated:

> Plaintiffs in *Shakman* were challenging the same practices complained of in the instant case: incumbents were using staff paid out of the public treasury for campaign activities. The complaint in *Shakman* alleged constitutional violations while that in the case at bar presents statutory claims. In both cases, application of the criteria from *Baker v. Carr, supra*, results in an identical analysis.

The *Shakman* case relied on *Baker v. Carr:*

> We acknowledge that the decisions just referred to (*Baker*, ballot-access and reapportionment cases) involved mechanical aspects of the election process: *e.g.*, the right to vast a vote, a candidate's place on the ballot, and equal size in districts entitled to a representative. The interest in an equal chance and an equal voice is allegedly impaired in the case before us by the misuse of official power over public employees so as to create a substantial, perhaps massice, political effort in favor of the ins and against the outs.

* * *

> We see no ground upon which to decide that the controversy suggested by plaintiffs' claims is non-justiciable.
> 435 F. 2d at 270.

A clear conflict between the Seventh Circuit and the District of Columbia Circuit exists concerning the justiciability of claims involving use of tax-supported staff for campaign purposes. The petition for a writ of certiorari should be granted to review this division in the Circuits.

## III. THE CASE AT BAR PRESENTS IMPORTANT FEDERAL QUESTIONS WHICH SHOULD BE REVIEWED BY THE SUPREME COURT.

The federal question presented are important because the fundamental fairness of our electoral system is at stake. The Supreme Court has noted that incumbents should not be given an "unfair" advantage over challengers. *Buckley v. Valeo,* 424 U.S. 1, 98, n. 133 (1976). If Congress is allowed to use staff for its re-election campaigns, then we have created a self-perpetuating royalty which subverts the will of the people.

## CONCLUSION

For all of these reasons, petitioners request that a writ of certiorari issue to review the decision of the District of Columbia Circuit.

Respectfully submitted,

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# APPENDIX

APPENDIX A

# United States Court of Appeals

FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA CIRCUIT

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No. 78-1618

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, *ex rel.* JOEL D. JOSEPH,
AND
JOEL D. JOSEPH, APPELLANTS.

v.

HOWARD W. CANNON, *et al.*

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Appeal from the United States District Court
for the District of Columbia
(D.C. Civil No. 77-00452)

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Argued June 18, 1979

Decided January 30, 1981

**Rehearing Denied March 2, 1981**

*Joel D. Joseph*, with whom *Paul D. Kamenar* was on the brief, *pro se*.

*Kevin T. Maroney*, with whom *Edward P. Morgan* was on the brief, for appellees.

Before ROBINSON and MACKINNON, *Circuit Judges*, and HAROLD H. GREENE, *District Judge*.*

Opinion for the Court filed by *Circuit Judge Robinson*.

ROBINSON, *Circuit Judge*: This appeal challenges the District Court's disposition of a somewhat novel suit brought by Joel D. Joseph, the appellant, against Senator Howard W. Cannon and his administrative assistant, Chester B. Sobsey, the appellees. Initiated pursuant to Section 231 of the False Claims Act,[1] the litigation features two counts respectively charging that Senator Cannon authorized payment of Sobsey's federal salary during a period when Sobsey was working "extensively and exclusively" on the Senator's 1976 reelection campaign,[2] and that other members of the Senator's staff performed personal services for him and his family while collecting their governmental salaries.[3] The District Court dismissed the first count for lack of jurisdiction,[4] and the second for failure to state with sufficient specificity a claim upon which relief could be granted.[5]

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*Of the United States District Court for the District of Columbia, sitting by designation pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 292(a) (1976).

[1] 31 U.S.C. § 231 (1976), quoted in relevant part *infra* note 22.

[2] Appellant's Complaint (Complaint) ¶¶ 8, 9, Appendix to Brief for Appellant (App.) 8.

[3] Complaint ¶ 10, App. 8.

[4] *United States ex rel. Joseph* v. *Cannon*, Civ. No. 77-0452 (D.D.C. May 25, 1978) (memorandum and order), at 1-2, App. 4-5. In the court's view, the jurisdictional barrier was 31 U.S.C. § 232 (1976), quoted in relevant part in text *infra* at note 29.

[5] *United States ex rel. Joseph* v. *Cannon*, *supra* note 4, at 2, App. 5.

While we depart from aspects of the District Court's analysis, we agree that the False Claims Act does not empower the federal courts to address appellant's first claim,[6] and that the vagueness of appellant's complaint is fatal to the second.[7] We accordingly affirm the District Court's judgment in both respects.

## I. BACKGROUND

Howard W. Cannon is a United States Senator from the State of Nevada. At all times relevant to this case, Chester B. Sobsey was a Senate employee serving as his administrative assistant. In 1969, Senator Cannon, compliably with then Senate Rule 43,[8] filed a written designation with the Secretary of the Senate authorizing Sobsey to solicit, receive, distribute, and act as custodian of the Senator's campaign funds.

According to appellant, however, Sobsey did far more for the 1976 Cannon campaign than administer contributions. From March, 1975, through November, 1976, Sobsey allegedly worked "extensively and exclusively" for the Senator's reelection.[9] Throughout this period, the complaint avers, "Sobsey accepted his regular pay for services ostensibly performed as Senator Cannon's administrative assistant even though such services were not performed or [were] performed in a perfunctory or nominal manner."[10]

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[6] Discussed in Part III *infra*.

[7] Discused in Part II *infra*.

[8] For the text of Rule 43, see note 32 *infra*. During the period here in question, this rule remained as adopted in 1968. See S. Jour. 247, 90th Cong., 2d Sess., Mar. 22, 1968. A minor amendment was effected by the Senate in 1977, and the provision was renumbered Rule 49. See note 32 *infra*.

[9] Complaint ¶ 8, App. 8.

[10] *Id.* ¶ 9, App. 8. Because the first paragraph states that Sobsey worked "exclusively" on Senator Cannon's reelection

Appellant maintains that Senator Cannon was aware of the nature of his assistant's activities, yet authorized these salary payments.[11] Appellant further asserts that at unspecified times other unnamed members of the Senator's staff rendered personal services to the Senator and his family.[12]

Invoking the False Claims Act, appellant brought suit against Senator Cannon and Sobsey in the District Court for recovery, on behalf of the United States, of double the damages allegedly sustained by the federal treasury plus $2,000 for each claim made,[13] and punitive damages of $50,000 from each.[14] For himself, as relator or *qui tam* plaintiff, he asked "fair and reasonable compensation,"[15] and reimbursement for the expenses of the litigation.[16] The United States declined to participate in the suit, and appellees moved to dismiss the complaint. The District Court granted the motion,[17] and this appeal followed.

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campaign, whereas the second paragraph suggests that Sobsey actually continued to perform his administrative tasks during the period in question, albeit in a "perfunctory or nominal manner," the two allegations appear to be inconsistent. For purposes of determining the propriety of the District Court's dismissal, however, we must view the complaint in the light most favorable to appellant. *Jenkins* v. *McKeithen*, 395 U.S. 411, 421-422, 89 S.Ct. 1843, 1849, 23 L.Ed.2d 404, 416-417 (1969); 5 C. Wright & A. Miller, Federal Practice § 1357 (1969). We accordingly disregard any inconsistency.

[11] Complaint ¶ 9, App. 8.

[12] *Id.* ¶ 10, App. 8.

[13] Complaint, Prayers for Damages ¶ 1, App. 8. See 31 U.S.C. § 231 (1976).

[14] Complaint, Prayers for Damages, ¶ 1, App. 8-9.

[15] *Id.* ¶ 2, App. 9.

[16] *Id.* See 31 U.S.C. § 232(E)(2) (1976); note 25 *infra*.

[17] *United States ex rel. Joseph* v. *Cannon*, *supra* note 4, at 1-2, App. 4-5.

## II. The Count One Claim

Appellant theorizes that Senator Cannon's authorization of salary payments to Sobsey while the aide was not performing "official legislative and representational duties" made out an actionable false claim.[18] The District Court held that the Government already possessed the information set forth in appellant's complaint, and that the action was barred by Section 232(c) of the Act[19] for that reason.[20] Although an examination of the language and purposes of that provision convinces us that the court's interpretation was incorrect, we are persuaded that dismissal of appellant's first count was nonetheless proper.[21]

### A. *The Requirements of Section 232(c)*

The False Claims Act[22] was adopted during the Civil War, a time when massive frauds were being committed

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[18] Complaint ¶ 8, App. 8.

[19] Quoted in relevant part in text *infra* at note 29.

[20] *United States ex rel. Joseph* v. *Cannon*, *supra* note 4, at 1-2, App. 4-5.

[21] Although the issue has not been raised before us by the parties, this action arguably is barred by the Speech or Debate Clause, U.S. Const., art. 1 § 6. See *Davis* v. *Passman*, 442 U.S. 228, 247, 99 S.Ct. 2264, 2277, 60 L.Ed.2d 846, 863 (1979) (discussing but not deciding Speech or Debate issue); *Consumers Union* v. *Periodical Correspondents' Ass'n*, 169 U.S.App.D.C. 370, 379-380, 515 F.2d 1341, 1350-1351 (1975), *cert. denied*, 423 U.S. 1051, 96 S.Ct. 780, 46 L.Ed.2d 640 (1976); *United States ex rel. Hollander* v. *Clay*, 420 F.Supp. 853 (D.D.C. 1976). In light of our construction of the False Claims Act *vis-a-vis* the claims in suit, we do not reach that question.

[22] The liability provision of the False Claims Act presently reads:

> Any person . . . who shall make or cause to be made, or present or cause to be presented, for payment or approval,

against the Government.[23] To encourage action against defrauders,[24] Congress authorized private citizens to bring civil actions against wrongdoers on the Government's behalf, and to retain half of any recovery.[25] The Act's original language permitted a plaintiff to launch a suit and collect his share of the damages even when he

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> to or by any person or officer in the civil, military, or naval service of the United States, any claim upon or against the Government of the United States, or any department or officer thereof, knowing such claim to be false, fictitious, or fraudulent, . . . shall forfeit and pay to the United States the sum of two thousand dollars, and, in addition, double the amount of damages which the United States may have sustained by reason of the doing or committing such act, together with the costs of suit; and such forfeiture and damages shall be sued for in the same suit.

31 U.S.C. § 231 (1976).

[23] See Report of the Special Committee on Government Contracts, H.R. Rep. 2, 37th Cong., 2d Sess. 1-2 (1861).

[24] On the broad range of situations covered by the Act, see, *e.g.*, *Rainwater* v. *United States*, 356 U.S. 590, 592, 78 S.Ct. 946, 948, 2 L.Ed.2d 996, 999 (1958); *Peterson* v. *Weinberger*, 508 F.2d 45, 52 (5th Cir.), *cert. denied*, 423 U.S. 830, 96 S.Ct. 50, 46 L.Ed.2d 47 (1975); *Alperstein* v. *United States*, 291 F.2d 455, 456 (5th Cir. 1961); *United States ex rel. Hollander* v. *Clay*, *supra* note 21, 420 F.Supp. at 858; *United States* v. *Fowler*, 282 F.Supp. 1, 2 (E.D.N.Y. 1968).

[25] If the plaintiff—whether the United States or a private citizen—wins a False Claims Act suit, the defendant must remit double the amount of money falsely paid plus $2,000 for each claim made. 31 U.S.C. § 231 (1976). Originally, a private plaintiff was entitled to one-half of any recovery. Act of Mar. 2, 1863, ch. 67, § 6, 12 Stat. 698. As the statute now stands, successful private plaintiffs may collect "an amount, not in excess of one-fourth of the proceeds of such suit or any settlement thereof, which in the judgment of the court is fair and reasonable compensation . . . ," plus reasonable and necessary expenses. 31 U.S.C. § 232(E)(2) (1976).

contributed absolutely nothing to exposure of the crime,[26] however, and this provision was much abused in later years by piranha-like plaintiffs who sued solely on the basis of information already contained in governmental files and indictments.[27] The Act was therefore amended in 1943[28] to permit only those persons unveiling new information to sue:

> The court shall have no jurisdiction to proceed with any such suit brought under clause (B) of this section or pending suit brought under this section whenever it shall be made to appear that such suit was based upon evidence or information in the possession of the United States, or any agency, officer, or employee thereof, at the time such suit was brought. . . .[29]

The District Court concluded that appellant had not surmounted this statutory barrier because the Secretary of the Senate had in his files Senator Cannon's written designation of Sobsey to administer campaign contributions.[30] We cannot, however, subscribe to this holding. Merely because the Government holds some information related to an allegedly false claim does not mean that suit under the Act is barred by Section 232(c). As the Ninth Circuit has trenchantly observed:

> To require that the evidence and information possessed by the United States be a mirror image of that

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[26] See *United States ex rel. Marcus* v. *Hess*, 317 U.S. 537, 545, 63 S.Ct. 379, 385–386, 87 L.Ed. 443, 450–451 (1943).

[27] H.R. Rep. No. 263, 78th Cong., 1st Sess. 2 (1943) (letter from Attorney General Biddle). See also, 89 Cong. Rec. 2800–2801, 78th Cong., 1st Sess. (1943).

[28] Act of Dec. 23, 1943, ch. 377, § 1, 57 Stat. 608. See H.R. Rep. No. 263, 78th Cong., 1st Sess. (1943).

[29] 31 U.S.C. § 232(C) (1976).

[30] *United States ex rel. Joseph* v. *Cannon*, *supra* note 4, at 1–2, App. 4–5.

> in the hands of the *qui tam* plaintiff would virtually eliminate the bar. On the other hand, to permit the bar to be invoked when the United States possesses only rumors while the *qui tam* plaintiff has evidence and information would be to permit the bar to repeal effectively much of the False Claims Act. Between these extremes lies the answer.
>
> More precisely, the answer rests in that area where it is possible to say that the evidence and information in the possession of the United States at the time the False Claims Act suit was brought was sufficient to enable it adequately to investigate the case and to make a decision whether to prosecute.[31]

The question, properly, then, is whether the information conveyed by the designation transmittal to the Secretary of the Senate could have formed the basis for a governmental decision on prosecution, or could at least have alerted law-enforcement authorities to the likelihood of wrongdoing; quite obviously it could have had no such effect. The designation, filed in accordance with then Senate Rule 43(1),[32] revealed only that Sobsey was authorized to

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[31] *Pettis ex rel. United States* v. *Morrison-Knudsen Co.*, 577 F.2d 668, 674 (9th Cir. 1978).

[32]

> No officer or employee whose salary is paid by the Senate may receive, solicit, be the custodian of, or distribute any funds in connection with any campaign for the nomination for election, or the election of any individual to be a Member of the Senate or to any other Federal office. This prohibition does not apply to any assistant to a Senator who has been designated by that Senator to perform any of the functions described in the first sentence of this paragraph and who is compensated at a rate in excess of $10,000 per annum if such designation has been made in writing and filed with the Secretary of the Senate. The Secretary of the Senate shall make the designation available for public inspection.

Standing Rules for Conducting Business in the Senate of the United States, Senate Manual, S. Doc. No. 94-1, 94th Cong.,

solicit and handle campaign contributions. And because Sobsey could have discharged this function without neglecting his official duties in any way, the Rule 43 filing by itself cannot be deemed to have adequately informed the Government of possible wrongdoing by either Senator Cannon or his aide. Only when combined with appellant's allegation that Sobsey completely disregarded his duties as the Senator's administrative assistant does any possibility of a cause of action emerge. This case thus differs radically from those where the Government possessed comprehensive and crucial evidence prior to initiation of a Section 231 suit.[33] Since the information the Government derived from the Senator's designation was innocuous by itself, we conclude that Section 232(c) does not apply and that the District Court improperly predicated its dismissal of count one upon that provision.

B. *Liability Under the Act*

Although we thus disagree with the District Court's jurisdictional analysis, we are nevertheless constrained to hold that dismissal of appellant's first count was appropriate. We recognize, of course, that a motion to dismiss for failure to state a claim should not be granted "unless it appears beyond doubt that the plaintiff can prove no set of

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1st Sess. 69 (1975), amended and renumbered as S. Rule 49, S. Res. 188, 95th Cong., 1st Sess. (1977). The 1977 amendment limited to two the number of staff members a Senator may authorize to administer campaign funds; otherwise the substance remained intact. See note 64 *infra* and accompanying text.

[33] See, *e.g.*, *United States ex rel. Thompson* v. *Hays*, 432 F.Supp. 253, 255-256 (D.D.C. 1976); *United States ex rel. McCans* v. *Armour & Co.*, 146 F.Supp. 546, 549 (D.D.C. 1956), *aff'd*, 102 U.S.App.D.C. 391, 254 F.2d 90, *cert. denied*, 358 U.S. 834, 79 S.Ct. 57, 3 L.Ed.2d 71 (1958); *United States* v. *Aster*, 176 F.Supp. 208, 210 (E.D. Pa. 1959), *aff'd*, 275 F.2d 281 (3d Cir.), *cert. denied*, 364 U.S. 894, 81 S.Ct. 223, 5 L.Ed.2d 188 (1960).

tations on the capabilities of judicial tribunals as well as to the separation-of-powers concerns central in our system of government.[39]

So it is that so-called political questions are denied judicial scrutiny, not only because they invite courts to intrude into the province of coordinate branches of government,[40] but also because courts are fundamentally underequipped to formulate national policies or develop standards of conduct for matters not legal in nature.[41] A challenge to the interworkings of a Senator and his staff member raises at the outset the specter that such a question lurks,[42] and it is to an investigation of that possibility that we first turn.

2. *Lack of Judicially Discernible Rules or Standards*

Although the precise boundaries of the political-question doctrine are obscure, "'[i]n determining whether a question falls within [that] category, the appropriateness under our system of government of attributing finality to the action of the political departments and also the lack of satisfactory criteria for a judicial determination are dominant considerations.'"[43] Prominent characteristics of political questions are

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[39] See *id.*

[40] See *Baker* v. *Carr*, 369 U.S. 186, 217, 82 S.Ct. 691, 710, 7 L.Ed.2d 663, 686 (1962); *Sanders* v. *McClellan*, 150 U.S.App.D.C. 58, 66–67, 463 F.2d 894, 902–903 (1972).

[41] See *Baker* v. *Carr*, *supra* note 40, 369 U.S. at 198, 217, 82 S.Ct. at 691, 710, 7 L.Ed.2d at 674, 686.

[42] See also note 21 *supra*.

[43] *Baker* v. *Carr*, *supra* note 40, 369 U.S. at 210, 82 S.Ct. at 706, 7 L.Ed.2d at, 682, quoting *Coleman* v. *Miller*, 307 U.S. 433, 454–455, 59 S.Ct. 972, 982, 83 L.Ed. 1385, 1396–1397 (1939).

> a textually demonstrable constitutional commitment of the issue to a coordinate political department; or a lack of judicially discoverable and manageable standards for resolving it; or the impossibility of deciding without an initial policy determination of a kind clearly for nonjudicial discretion; or the impossibility of a court's undertaking independent resolution without expressing lack of the respect due coordinate branches of government. . . .[44]

We perceive no "textually demonstrable commitment" of the issue before us to any other branch of the Federal Government.[45] Nor do we believe that judicial review of congressional employment decisions necessarily involves a "lack of the respect due coordinate branches of government."[46] We do find, however, a complete absence "of judicially discoverable and manageable standards for resolving" the question whether Senators may use paid staff members in their campaign activities.

a. *Lack of Statutory, Administrative and Case Law*

Appellant cites no judicial decision or administrative ruling, nor has our own research revealed any, establishing a standard to guide a court in determination of the issue generated by the first count of the complaint. Nor have we encountered any statute affording that kind of assistance.[47] It is true that "sums appropriated for the vari-

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[44] *Baker* v. *Carr*, *supra* note 40, 369 U.S. at 217, 82 S.Ct. at 710, 7 L.Ed.2d at 686. Accord, *Powell* v. *McCormick*, 395 U.S. 486, 518, 89 S.Ct. 1944, 1962, 23 L.Ed.2d 491, 515 (1969).

[45] See *United States ex rel. Hollander* v. *Clay*, *supra* note 21, 420 F.Supp. at 857. Compare *Davis* v. *Passman*, *supra* note 21, 442 U.S. at 235 n.11, 246-247, 99 S.Ct. at 2271 n.11, 2275, 60 L.Ed.2d at 856 n.11, 863-864.

[46] See *Davis* v. *Passman*, *supra* note 21, 442 U.S. at 235 n.11, 99 S.Ct. at 2271 n.11, 60 L.Ed.2d at 856 n.11.

[47] We discern nothing in the False Claims Act itself to aid a confident answer to the inquiry whether the conduct alleged in

ous branches of expenditure in the public service" are statutorily confined "to the objects for which they are respectively made," and consequently are available "for no others."[48] But we are unable to agree with the American Law Division of the Library of Congress[49] in its conclusion that this statutory directive perforce bars public compensation of congressional staff members for the performance of campaign activities.[50] The unambiguous meaning of this relatively straightforward provision is simply that appropriated funds are to be applied solely to statutorily-enumerated purposes,[51] and the appropriations bills covering the era of Senator Cannon's reelection campaign tell us no more than that their purpose was "compensation of officers, employees, clerks to Senators."[52] Even assuming, as fairly we may, that the funds appropriated were intended solely to compensate staffers for performance of their "official" duties, we are left with the perplexing question whether campaign work is official activity.[53] Not even the Senate itself has been able to reach a consensus on the propriety of using staff members in

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count one of appellant's complaint established a claim within its purview.

[48] 31 U.S.C. § 628 (1976).

[49] See note 80 *infra* and accompanying text.

[50] See S. Rep. No. 95-500, 95th Cong., 1st Sess., 24 (1977).

[51] We have not been able to find any judicial or executive interpretation helpful in this connection. The reason may well be that the plain language leaves no room for doubt.

[52] Legislative Branch Appropriations Act, 1976, Pub. L. No. 94-59, 89 Stat. 269 (1975); Legislative Branch Appropriations Act, 1975, Pub. L. No. 93-371, 88 Stat. 424 (1974).

[53] We note that the Federal Elections Commission has also not addressed this problem directly.

reelection campaigns;[54] rather, the history of its attempts to develop a suitable rule reveals the lack of a firm standard during the period relevant to this case, and vividly portrays the keen difficulties with which courts would be faced were they to attempt to design guidelines on their own.

b. *Senatorial Treatment*

When, in 1976, Senator Cannon launched his reelection drive, the Senate restricted campaign activity by staff members only in the area of fund-handling. Senate Resolution 266, adopted in 1966, had established standards of conduct for Members, officers and employees,[55] and the sole provision dealing with staffers' participation in campaigns was Rule 43,[56] which allowed only designated employees to receive, solicit, hold, or distribute campaign funds.[57]

Quite significantly the Senate Select Committee on Standards, in recommending Rule 43, noted the high degree of personal allegiance owed a Member of Congress by his immediate staff, and the undesirability of interference with a Member's discretion in assigning duties to staff personnel.[58] Resultantly, the Committee disavowed any

[54] Even had the Senate done so, it is unclear whether a federal court would be the appropriate forum for seeking enforcement of its rule on that subject. See *Ray* v. *Proxmire*, 189 U.S.App.D.C. 220, 223, 581 F.2d 998, 1001, *cert. denied*, 439 U.S. 933, 99 S.Ct. 326, 58 L.Ed.2d 329 (1978) (interpretation and application of Senate rules is usually a matter not for the courts but for the Senate).

[55] See 114 Cong. Rec. 7388–7408 (1968).

[56] Quoted in note 32 *supra*.

[57] See 114 Cong. Rec. 7407 (1968).

[58] The Committee explained:

> The committee is very reluctant to recommend the curtailment of the discretion of a Senator to assign duties to

intention to deter campaign activity by Senate employees beyond involvement with campaign monies.[59] The floor debate on Resolution 266 similarly was a reaffirmation that a Senator's staff was generally free to assist in his reelection efforts. Both Senator Stennis, the chairman of the Select Committee, and Senator Cooper, a member of the Committee, emphasized that, except for fundraising, the Committee had imposed no limits on staffers' campaign activities.[60]

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his assistants, but the relationship of a Senator and his staff requires some regulation to prevent abuse. Recent experience has shown that the handling of political campaign funds by an officer or employee of the Senate is just such a case of abuse.

S. Rep. No. 1015, 90th Cong., 2d Sess. 17 (1968).

[59] *Id.* at 19.

[60] Senator Stennis explained:

> A proposal was made not to let the staff members have anything to do with a Senator's reelection. However, we unanimously opposed that on the simple ground that the staff is a necessary part of the operation and must work up the facts on which the Senator acts . . . . So we totally ruled out the idea of prohibiting staff members from taking part in the campaigns for the nomination or renomination of Senators.

114 Cong. Rec. 6836 (1968) (remarks of Senator Stennis). Later, in response to questions from his colleagues, Senator Stennis reaffirmed the narrow scope of Rule 43:

> There is no prohibition on any staff member any time during a campaign. Their pay is not to be stopped or any benefits denied in any way unless they go out and violate the rule about money, receiving or soliciting funds for an election; otherwise, they are free to help out with the record, and the campaign, and to help get up speeches, and so forth.

114 Cong. Rec. 6838–6839 (1968). And Senator Cooper stated:

> I would say that this question on how many employees are used in a campaign is one we cannot deal with now. It

It was not until after Senator Cannon's 1976 reelection that the Senate began to reconsider the role of staff in senatorial campaigns. In early 1977, a Special Committee on Official Conduct was instructed to formulate standards of behavior for Members, officers and employees.[61] On March 10 of that year, the Committee reported favorably on Senate Resolution 110, which recommended major changes in the standing rules of the Senate.[62] One suggested revision was a new Rule 49, designed to refine the provisions of the older Rule 43 respecting the handling of campaign funds by forbiding staff members from soliciting such funds.[63] Paragraph 3 of Rule 49 also "attempted . . . to deal with some of the complicated and delicate issues relating to the political activity of officers and employees whose salaries are paid by the Senate."[64] The Committee readily acknowledged difficulties in distinguishing between a staffer's official duties and his campaign assistance,[65] but nevertheless proposed removal from the Senate payroll of officers and employees "engag[ing] substantially in campaign activities."[66] The Committee said:

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seems to address itself to the judgment and the sense of propriety of each Senate [*sic*].

114 Cong. Rec. 6839 (1968) (remarks of Senator Cooper).

[61] 123 Cong. Rec. 1361-1363 (1977).

[62] S. Rep. No. 49, 95th Cong., 1st Sess. (1977).

[63] Id. at 85.

[64] *Id.* at 14.

[65] *Id.* The Supreme Court also has noted the acute problems in differentiating between official and campaign activities. See *United States* v. *Brewster*, 408 U.S. 501, 512, 92 S.Ct. 2531, 2537, 33 L.Ed.2d 507, 518 (1972).

[66] Paragraph 3 of proposed new Rule 49 read:

No officer or employee of the Senate who is engaged substantially in campaign activities shall remain on the

> While the prohibition applies equally to activities on behalf of any candidate for Federal office, the particular concern of the Committee was that Senate staff not stay on the payroll if they are engaging in substantial campaign activities on behalf of the reelection effort of the Senator for whom they work.
>
> The Committee considered writing this rule in terms of the number of hours spent on campaigning for the percentage of time spent on campaign activities, but concluded that this approach would be futile. However, the Committee believes that the intention of the rule is clear enough: If a Senate employee is substantially engaged in campaign activities on behalf of a candidate, that the employee should not be receiving his salary from the Government. The Committee understands that this is the approach currently taken by most Members of the Senate.[67]

Because of the complexity of the issue, however, the rule's injunction was to be qualified by exceptions for an individual's "political activity directly related to his official duties,"[68] for "campaign activity of a de minimus nature,"[69] and for "voluntary campaign activity on the officer's or employee's own time."[70]

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> payroll of the Senate. Nothing in this paragraph shall be construed as prohibiting an officer or employee from engaging in (1) political activity directly related to his official duties; (2) campaign activity of a de minimus nature during office hours; and (3) voluntary campaign activity on the officer's or employee's own time.

S. Rep. No. 49, *supra* note 62, at 85–86.

[67] *Id.* at 52.

[68] See note 66 *supra*. See also S. Rep. No. 49, *supra* note 62, at 52.

[69] See note 66 *supra*. See also S. Rep. No. 49, *supra* note 62, at 52.

[70] See note 66 *supra*. See also S. Rep. No. 49, *supra* note 62, at 52–53.

Paragraph 3 of Rule 49 represents the most serious effort a Senate unit has yet made to regulate the use of Members' personal staffs in reelection campaigns. It met a very early demise, however—a fate reflective of the still-continuing inability of the Senate to prescribe binding standards of behavior in that regard, as well as of the perceived need for further study of the problem. Before Resolution 110 was introduced on the floor of the Senate, Paragraph 3 was withdrawn for reasons stated by Senator Nelson, the floor manager of the resolution:

> The committee found it extremely difficult to write such a rule without making all political activity related to official duties look suspect. The committee concluded that to the extent a problem exists in this area, it could apply equally to the employees of a House Member or a Governor seeking Federal office, and that it was most appropriately a matter within the jurisdiction of the Federal Election Commission. For all these reasons, the committee has recommended that the Rules Committee, which has jurisdiction over the FECA, to [*sic*] study the problem in the context of its review of the FECA later this year and report proposals dealing with this subject.[71]

Accordingly, Paragraph 3 was replaced with a provision requiring the Committee on Rules and Administration to report, within 180 days, "proposals to prohibit the misuse of official staff by holders of public office in campaigns for . . . election, to Federal office."[72] Resolution 110, as thus altered, was adopted by the Senate.[73]

The report summoned by Resolution 110 did not issue early. While it was awaited, there were developments in the Senate, but these too mirrored the body's usual am-

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[71] 123 Cong. Rec. 8041 (1977) (statement of Senator Nelson).

[72] *Id.* at 8045.

[73] *Id.* at 10060.

bivalence on the problem. On May 11, 1977, the Senate Select Committee on Ethics rendered an interpretive ruling on the use of staff in campaigns pending availability of the report of the Committee on Rules and Administration.[74] The Committee advised:

> In the iterim [*sic*], Members must use their best judgment in taking staff off the Senate payroll to devote substantial portions of their time or to participate for any extended period in such activities. The Committeee [*sic*] on Ethics recognizes staff frequently will be reinstated after campaign activities.[75]

Additionally, on June 13, 1977, the Senate agreed to Resolution 188, which effectuated a recommendation by the Committee on Rules and Administration that Rule 49 be amended to allow designated employees to solicit as well as handle campaign funds.[76] It is of no little moment for this case that the Committee's report called attention to Rule 49's proposed ban on fund-solicitation by staffers,[77] and declared that aside from fund-raising rules

> [t]he committee is not aware of any laws which prohibit individuals who are part of a Senator's staff from participating in a Senator's reelection campaign as

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[74]124 Cong. Rec. S17599-17600 (daily ed. Oct. 7, 1978).

[75]*Id.* at S17599-17600. The Committee also addressed the question "[t]o what extent may Senate employees volunteer time after office hours or while on annual leave to assist in political fund raising events for Members and candidates for election to the Senate?" *Id.* at S17599. The Committee responded:

> In the interim Members should remove staff from the Senate payroll to participate for any extended period in such activities.

*Id.*

[76]123 Cong. Rec. 18626 (1977).

[77]S. Rep. No. 241, 95th Cong., 1st Sess. 1, 2 (1977). See also note 63 *supra* and accompanying text.

> long as they do not neglect their Senate duties, and the committee does not feel there should be such proscriptions.[78]

Meanwhile, the Committee on Rules and Administration pressed forward in the mission directed by Senate Resolution 110.[79] Early on, the Committee requested the American Law Division of the Library of Congress to examine and report on existing law relating to utilization of federal employees in election campaigns.[80] As the deadline for the Committee's report drew near, however, its task remained incomplete.[81] The Senate therefore authorized the Committee to consider the referred issues in two stages—the first a report on current law, and the second a study of the problem based upon conclusions reached at the end of the first stage.[82]

The Committee issued its first report on October 17, 1977.[83] With respect to staff use in election campaigns, the report recounted the salient events discussed earlier in this opinion.[84] On the basis of this review, the Committee

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[78] *Id.* at 1-2.

[79] See text *supra* at note 72.

[80] S. Rep. No. 95-500, 95th Cong., 1st Sess. 1, 4 (1977).

[81] See *id.* at 2.

[82] *Id.*

[83] See *id.*

[84] *Id.* at 2-5. The report of the American Law Division of the Library of Congress was appended as Exhibit 1 to the Committee's report. *Id.* at 15-34. The Library of Congress study reached these overall conclusions:

> There appear to be no Federal statutes which specifically prohibit Federal officeholders from using their official staff for campaign purposes. There exist, however, various broad general guidelines which direct that official staff fulfill their official duties; and, in addition, certain executive

concluded that "[o]ther than the actual handling of campaign funds, the Senate has not imposed any restrictions on the participation of a member of a Senator's staff in that Senator's reelection campaign."[85] The Committee therefore supported the

> general rule . . . that members of a Senator's staff are permitted to engage in the reelection campaign of a Senator, as long as that staff member does not neglect his or her Senate duties. The nature and scope of a staff member's Senate duties are determined by each Member of the Senate. Such duties necessarily encompass political and representational responsibilities, as well as legislative, administrative, or clerical ones, and are often performed during irregular and unconventional work hours. A similar rule of practice has been followed in the House of Representatives, and would be generally applicable to other Federal employees not covered by the Hatch Act.[86]

The Committee announced its intention to study, as the second stage of its work, the role of staff members in political campaigns[87]—a project in which the Committee presumably is still engaged.[88]

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branch employees are prohibited from engaging in any partisan political activity.

In the case of official staff working for Members of Congress, the Member delineates the staffers' official duties. Once the staffer has fulfilled these official duties, he may then volunteer his free time to work on campaign matters for the Member.

*Id.* at 15 (footnote omitted).

[85] *Id.* at 2.

[86] *Id.* at 4.

[87] *Id.* at 2, 5.

[88] Our research has not disclosed anything further from the Committee.

### 3. *Manageability and Need for Initial Policy Determinations*

As this historical resume makes abundantly clear, there were in 1976—and there are now—no "manageable standards" for a court to apply when viewing staff participation in a Senate reelection campaign.[89] Moreover, the inability of the Senate—a body constitutionally authorized and institutionally equipped to formulate national policies and internal rules of conduct—to solve the problem demonstrates "the impossibility of deciding" the issue appellant poses "without an initial policy determination of a kind clearly for nonjudicial discretion."[90] Indeed, the interpretation of the False Claims Act suggested by appellant would license the courts to monitor every action taken by a Senator and his aide in an effort to determine whether it is sufficiently "official" or too "political."

The dilemma thus posed is just as unsurmountable here as we found it to be in another recent case—one involving a presidential reelection campaign.[91] There we cited both lack of standing and general prudential considerations in declining to exercise jurisdiction to deal with claims of misuse of federal power and funds by a candidate who allegedly had followed

> a concerted course of conduct designed to use the public treasury for salaries, travel expenses, costs of meetings and other political outlays; to grant and withhold public employment based upon political support by the employee; and to promise and award federal programs and funds to communities as political

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[89] See text *supra* at notes 43-46.

[90] *Baker* v. *Carr*, *supra* note 40, 369 U.S. at 217, 59 S.Ct. at 710, 83 L.Ed. at 686.

[91] *Winpisinger* v. *Watson*, ___ U.S.App.D.C. ___, 628 F.2d 133 (1980).

> inducements and rewards, all in order to obtain support for President Carter's renomination.[92]

These accusations, we noted, "relate[d], quite literally, to virtually every discretionary decision made by the Administration acting through . . . high government officials;" "[c]onsequently," we said, "any relief, to be effective, would have to be as broad as the authority of the high offices held by the federal defendants."[93] So,

> [w]hether shaped as declaratory relief, or injunctive relief, or both, the court's judgment would have to interject itself into practically every facet of the Executive Branch of the federal government, on a continuing basis, for the purpose of appraising whether considerations other than pure public service motivated a particular defendant in the performance of his or her official duties.[94]

But this, we concluded, was beyond the ability of the judiciary, for the courts simply are "not suited to undertake neutral consideration of every Executive action."[95]

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[92] *Id.* at ___, 628 F.2d at 135.

[93] *Id.* at ___, 628 F.2d at 139.

[94] *Id.*

[95] We were also concerned that close supervision of the Executive Branch might violate separation-of-powers principles, for such "action would necessarily carry with it an implied lack of respect for a coordinate branch of government." *Id.* at ___ n.30, 628 F.2d at 140 n.30. While we do not believe that judicial examination of congressional employment decisions would necessarily connote disrespect, see text *supra* at note 45, close oversight of daily legislative activities—coupled with a lack of congressionally-endorsed standards—might well be seen as invading the legislative prerogative. Thus, in *Public Citizen, Inc.* v. *Simon*, 176 U.S.App.D.C. 209, 539 F.2d 211 (1976), we observed in a related vein that granting taxpayers standing "to attack any executive action that draws on an outstanding appropriation on the ground that the purchases or services are not

## III. The Count Two Claim

Appellant's remaining contention, advanced in the second count of his complaint, is that at unspecified times unnamed members of Senator Cannon's staff rendered personal services for the Senator and his family while collecting their governmental salaries.[97] The District Court held that this allegation did not state a claim upon which relief could be granted because appellant had not "point[ed] to one specific instance in which a member of Cannon's personal staff was paid out of public income for personal tasks he or she performed."[98] We agree though we do not consider the issue to be as straightforward as the District Court suggests.

Rule 9(b) of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure mandates that "[i]n all averments of fraud or mistake, the circumstances constituting fraud or mistake shall be stated with particularity."[99] It cannot be doubted that "[n]ormally this means that the pleader must state the time, place and content of the false misrepresentations, the fact misrepresented and what was obtained or given up as a consequence of the fraud."[100] The rule serves to discourage the initiation of suits brought solely for their nuisance value,[101] and safeguards potential defendants from frivolous accusations of moral turpitude.[102] The need for this protection is especially acute where, as here, the principal defendant is an elected official whose reputation and posi-

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[97] See text *supra* at note 12.

[98] *United States ex rel. Joseph* v. *Cannon*, *supra* note 4, at 2, App. 5.

[99] Fed. R. Civ. P. 9(b).

[100] 2A J. Moore, Federal Practice ¶ 9.03, at 9-20 to 9-24 (2d ed. 1980). See 5 C. Wright & A. Miller, *supra* note 10, at § 1297.

[101] 5 C. Wright & A. Miller, *supra* note 10, at 1296.

[102] *Id.*

tion are particularly vulnerable to accusations of wrongdoing.[103] And because "fraud" encompasses a wide variety of activities, the requirements of Rule 9(b) guarantee all defendants sufficient information to allow for preparation of a response.[104]

In the present case, plaintiff's allegations could hardly have been more generalized and vague. He did not specify which members of the Senator's staff were involved, and he left unstated just what personal services they performed and precisely when those activities occurred. He even failed to allege any neglect of official duties.

Rule 9(b) is not, however, to be read in isolation from other procedural canons. As Professor Moore notes, "[t]he requirement of particularity does not abrogate Rule 8,[105] and it should be harmonized with the general directives in subdivisions (a) and (e) of Rule 8 that the pleadings should contain a 'short and plain statement of the claim or defense' and that each averment should be 'simple, concise and direct.'"[106] Viewed in this light, Rule 9(b)'s require-

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[103] *Felton* v. *Walston & Co.*, 508 F.2d 577, 581 (2d Cir. 1974) ("one purpose of rule 9(b) is to protect reputations of . . . professionals from scurrilous and baseless allegations of fraud"); *Rich* v. *Touche Ross & Co.*, 68 F.R.D. 243, 245 (S.D.N.Y. 1975) ("[t]he need for this protection [against vague allegations of fraud] is most acute where the potential defendants are professionals whose reputations in their field of expertise are most sensitive to slander").

[104] *Felton* v. *Walston & Co.*, *supra* note 103, 508 F.2d at 581; *Rich* v. *Touche Ross & Co.*, *supra* note 103, 68 F.R.D. at 245; 5 C. Wright & A. Miller, *supra* note 10, at § 1296.

[105] Fed. R. Civ. P. 8.

[106] 2A J. Moore, *supra* note 100, at ¶ 9.03, at 9–28. See *Felton* v. *Walston & Co.*, *supra* note 103, 508 F.2d at 581; *Schlick* v. *Penn-Dixie Cement Corp.*, 507 F.2d 374, 379 (2d Cir. 1974), *cert. denied*, 421 U.S. 976, 95 S.Ct. 1976, 44 L.Ed.2d 467 (1975).

ment of particularity is less certain a standard for measuring the sufficiency of a complaint, and we are constrained to probe deeper than the District Court did.

The rules of civil procedure are not to be strictly construed,[107] and "a litigant ought not be denied his day in court merely on the ground that his complaint is inartfully drawn."[108] The usual method for dealing with a nebulous complaint, then, is either to grant leave to amend[109] or to dismiss the complaint without prejudice.[110] Appellant now asks permission to file "a more definite statement of the claim, a bill of particulars or . . . to obtain the facts by discovery."[111] We think, however, that in the circumstances here the District Court's dismissal should be sustained. Appellant had more than eleven months—from June 7, 1977, when appellees filed their motion to dismiss, until May 25, 1978, when the District Court issued its dismissal order—to remedy the deficiencies of the original pleading. He made no effort to do so, and "[a]bsent some indication as to what appellant[ ] might add to [his] complaint in order to make it viable, we see no reason to grant appellant[ ] relief in this court which was not requested below."[112]

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[107] *Conley* v. *Gibson*, *supra* note 34, 355 U.S. at 48, 78 S.Ct. at 103, 2 L.Ed. 2d at 86. See also *Foman* v. *Davis*, 371 U.S. 178, 181-182, 83 S.Ct. 227, 230, 9 L.Ed.2d 222, 225-226 (1962); 2 J. Moore, *supra* note 100, at ¶ 1.13[1]; 4 C. Wright & A. Miller, *supra* 10, at § 1029.

[108] *Mooney* v. *Vitolo*, 435 F.2d 838, 839 (2d Cir. 1970).

[109] See Fed. R. Civ. P. 15(a); *Foman* v. *Davis*, *supra* note 107, 371 U.S. at 182, 83 S.Ct. at 230, 9 L.Ed.2d at 226.

[110] See *Barry* v. *St. Paul Fire & Marine Ins. Co.*, 555 F.2d 3, 13 (1st Cir. 1977), *aff'd*, 438 U.S. 531, 98 S.Ct. 2923, 57 L.Ed.2d 932 (1978).

[111] Brief for appellants at 11.

[112] *National Union of Hospital and Health Care Employees* v. *Carey*, 557 F.2d 278, 282 (2d Cir. 1977) (citation omitted). See

**The judgment appealed from is affirmed.**

*So ordered.*

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*Phillips* v. *Bureau of Prisons*, *supra* note 34, 192 U.S.App.D.C. at 368, 591 F.2d at 977 ("[b]ecause appellants have not sought to amend their complaint in either this court or the court below, this litigation draws to an end"); *Coates* v. *Board of Educ.*, 559 F.2d 445, 451 (7th Cir. 1977) (not error to dismiss complaint for insufficiency where leave to amend was never sought); *cf. Foman* v. *Davis*, *supra* note 107, 371 U.S. at 182, 83 S.Ct. at 230, 9 L.Ed.2d at 226 ("futility of amendment" is valid reason for not conferring right to amend following dismissal for failure to state a claim upon which relief can be granted); *Clark* v. *National Travelers Life Ins. Co.*, 518 F.2d 1167, 1169 (6th Cir. 1975) ("there is no 'duty [on the part] of the trial court or the appellate court to create a claim which appellant has not spelled out in his pleading'"), quoting *Case* v. *State Farm Mut. Auto Ins. Co.*, 294 F.2d 676, 678 (5th Cir. 1961).

# APPENDIX B

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| UNITED STATES OF AMERICA ex rel JOEL D. JOSEPH, Plaintiff, | ) | |
| v. | ) | Civil Action No. 77-0452 |
| HOWARD W. CANNON and CHESTER B. SOBSEY, Defendants. | ) | |

FILED
MAY 25 1978
JAMES F. DAVEY, Clerk

MEMORANDUM AND ORDER

The plaintiff brings this suit under the False Claims Act, 31 U.S.C. § 231, to recover, on behalf of the United States, public income paid by defendant, Senator Howard W. Cannon of Nevada, as salaries to his Administrative Assistant, defendant Chester B. Sobsey, and to others on his personal staff. Plaintiff alleges that Sobsey while paid as an Administrative Assistant worked on the Senator's re-election campaign for the period March, 1975 to November, 1976. He further argues that Cannon's staff performed for him and his family services paid for out of the public coffer even though they were not legislative duties.

The United States has chosen not to participate in this suit. The defendants have moved for dismissal of the complaint on the basis this Court does not have jurisdiction and that plaintiff has failed to state the particular instances of the alleged fraud as required by Rule 9(b), F.R. Civ. P.

The False Claims Act states clearly that no court has jurisdiction over private false claims if the evidence or information on which the suit is grounded is "in the

possession of the United States, or any agency, officer or office thereof. . . ." 31 U.S.C. § 232(c). Defendant Cannon, on May 14, 1969, did file with the Secretary of the Senate and publicly disclosed that defendant Sobsey was an aide authorized to receive and distribute campaign contributions. The Court therefore finds it has no jurisdiction over plaintiff's first claim.

The Court also agrees with defendants that the plaintiff has failed to state with particularity the circumstances of the fraud alleged in connection with Cannon's salary payments to his personal staff. The word "fraud" in the False Claims Act is used in the normal meaning of "deceit." United States ex rel. Brensilber v. Bausch & Lomb Optical Co., 131 F.2d 545 (2d Cir. 1942), aff'd, 320 U.S. 711. The plaintiff has failed to point to one specific instance in which a member of Cannon's personal staff was paid out of public income for personal tasks he or she performed. So this second charge must fail by the failure of plaintiff to state a claim on which relief may be granted.

The motion of defendants to dismiss this action is granted.

SO ORDERED.

UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE

Date: May 27, 1970

Office-Supreme Court, U.S.
FILED
JUN 18 1981
ALEXANDER L. STEVAS,
CLERK

No. 80-2036

IN THE

# Supreme Court of the United States

OCTOBER TERM, 1980

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, EX REL.,
JOEL D. JOSEPH
AND
JOEL D. JOSEPH,

*Petitioners,*

v.

HOWARD W. CANNON, ET AL.,

*Respondents.*

**ON PETITION FOR A WRIT OF CERTIORARI TO THE UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA CIRCUIT**

## BRIEF FOR THE RESPONDENTS IN OPPOSITION

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**ON PETITION FOR A WRIT OF CERTIORARI TO THE UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA CIRCUIT**

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## BRIEF FOR THE RESPONDENTS IN OPPOSITION

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### OPINIONS BELOW

The opinion of the district court is not reported; it is reproduced in the Appendix to the Petition at pp. 29a-30a. The opinion of the court of appeals is not yet reported, and is reproduced in Petitioner's Appendix at pp. 1a-28a.

### JURISDICTION

The judgment of the court of appeals was entered on January 30, 1981. Petitioners' timely petition for rehearing was denied March 2, 1981. The petition for certiorari was

filed on June 1, 1981. The jurisdication of this court is invoked under 28 U.S.C. 1254(i).

## RESTATEMENT OF THE QUESTION PRESENTED

Whether the False Claims Act grants a cause of action to a *qui tam,* plaintiff on allegations that a staff member of a Senator "worked extensively and exclusively" on the Senator's reelection campaign and accepted his pay even though his legislative duties "were not performed or otherwise performed in a perfunctory or nominal manner" when the Senate itself has refused to curtail such activities by staff employees and, indeed, has sanctioned such activities?[1]

## STATEMENT

The complaint in this case,which was filed in the district court by petitioner Joel D. Joseph as relator in the name of the United States, is predicated on the False Claims Act, codified at 31 U.S.C. 231, *et seq.,* relating to liability of persons making false claims against the government.

The act permits a private citizen to initiate such a suit. Pursuant to procedures, petitioner furnished the United States with information in his possession relating to the case, after which the Department of Justice notified the district court that the United States "declines to enter an appearance in this litigation or to otherwise assume responsibility for its continued prosecution." (Appellant's App. in the court below, p. 13).

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[1]The second question presented in the petition for writ of certiorari is completely inappropriate since the Complaint did *not* allege that Senator Cannon "directed a member of his legislative staff to work exclusively on his reelection campaign."

The Complaint alleges that paragraphs 8 through 10 thereof constitute violations of the False Claims Act. Those Paragraphs are as follows:

> "8. From March of 1975 to November, 1976, defendant Sobsey worked extensively and exclusively on Senator Cannon's re-election campaign or campaign-related tasks which were not part of Senator Cannon's official legislative and representational duties.
>
> 9. During this period of time, Senator Cannon's authorized payment of and defendant Sobsey accepted his regular pay for services ostensibly performed as Senator Cannon's administrative assistant even though such services were not performed or otherwise performed in a perfunctory or nominal manner. Such payments were knowingly made by Senator Cannon and knowingly received by Chester Sobsey.
>
> 10. During the period of time alleged in paragraph 8 and at other times, defendant Cannon had other members of his staff perform personal services to him and his family which were not part of Senator Cannon's official legislative and representational duties, but were nevertheless paid with public funds."
> (Appellant's App. in the Court of Appeals p. 8).

In the district court the respondents moved to dismiss the complaint on the grounds that: (1) it fails to allege with particularity the circumstances constituting the alleged fraud as required by Rule 9(b), Federal Rules of Civil Pro-

specter" of the presence of a political question not suitable for judicial scrutiny (Pet. App., p. 11a), the court of appeals without success looked for discernible rules or standards in statutory, administrative or case law and in the treatment of the subject by the Senate itself. In connection with the latter, the court below noted that the Senate Committee on Rules and Administration in 1977 concluded, after a review of the matter, that "[o]ther than the actual handling of campaign funds, the Senate has not imposed any restrictions on the participation of a member of a Senator's staff in that Senator's reelection campaign." (Pet. App., pp. 20a-21a).

The court of appeals concluded:

> "In the absence of any discernible legal standard — or even of a congressional policy determination — that would aid consideration and decision of the question raised by appellant's first count, we are loathe to give the False Claims Act an interpretation that would require the judiciary to develop rules of behavior for the Legislative Branch. We are unwilling to conclude that Congress gave the courts a free hand to deal with so sensitive and controversial a problem or invited them to assume the role of political overseer of the other branches of Government. Accordingly, we affirm the District Court's dismissal of appellant's first claim."
> (Pet. App., p. 24a).

## ARGUMENT

Petitioners assert as the reasons for granting a writ of certiorari in this case that (1) the decision of the court of appeals is in conflict with this Court's decision in *Baker* v.

*Carr,* 369 U.S. 186 (1962), and that (2) the decision of the court below creates a conflict in the circuits with a 1970 decision of the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals. Neither of those alleged justifications for the grant of a writ withstands the slightest scrutiny.

In assessing the boundaries of the political-question doctrine the court of appeals specifically relied on the "prominent characteristics of political questions" as set forth by this Court in *Baker* v. *Carr,* supra, at 127, on the basis of which the court below concluded:

> "We perceive no 'textually demonstrable commitment' of the issue before us to any other branch of the Federal Government. Nor do we believe that judicial review of congressional employment decisions necessarily involves a 'lack of the respect due coordinate branches of government.' We do find, however, a complete absence 'of judicially discoverable and manageable standards for resolving' the question whether Senators may use paid staff members in their campaign activities." (Footnotes omitted; Pet. App., p. 12a).

Thus, not only is the decision of the court below *not* in conflict with *Baker* v. *Carr,* supra, but rather relies on it and is consonant with it.

But petitioners' real argument on this point is not based on a conflict of the court of appeals' decision with a holding of this Court, but is instead based on petitioners' displeasure that the Senate has not laid down the guidelines necessary to a judicial determination. (See Petition, p. 9: "If the Senate does not restrict campaign activities of staff, then Senators will maintain their built- in advantage over challengers.").

The fact of the matter is, however, that the Senate has not seen fit to restrict staff in the area of campaign activity except with respect to receipt of campaign funds. And that was accomplished by Senate Rule XLIII, adopted in 1966.[2]

As summarized by the Court below:

> "Quite significantly the Senate Select Committee on Standards, in recommending Rule 43, noted the high degree of personal allegiance owed a member of Congress by his immediate staff, and the undesirability of interference with a Member's discretion in assigning duties to staff personnel. Resultantly, the Committee disavowed any intention to deter campaign activity by Senate employees beyond involvement with campaign monies. The floor debate on Resolution 266 similarly was a reaffirmation that a Senator's staff was generally free to assist in his reelection

[2]Rule XLIII of the Standing Rules of the Senate provides "1. No officer or employee whose salary is paid by the Senate may receive, solicit, be the custodian of, or distribute any funds in connection with any campaign for the nomination for election, or the election of any individual to be a Member of the Senate or to any other Federal office. This prohibition does not apply to any assistant to a Senator who has been designated by that Senator to perform any of the functions described in the first sentence of this paragraph and who is compensated at a rate in excess of $10,000 per annum if such designation has been made in writing and filed with the Secretary of the Senate. The Secretary of the Senate shall make the designation available for public inspection." (See Senate Manual, 93rd Cong., 1st Sess., Sen. Doc. No. 93-1, 1973). Respondent Sobsey had been designated by respondent Cannon as his assistant to handle campaign contributions, and such was duly filed with the Secretary of the Senate. (Appellant's App., in the Court of Appeals, p. 22).

> efforts. Both Senator Stennis, the chairman of the Select Committee, and Senator Cooper, a member of the Committee, emphasized that, except for fundraising, the Committee had imposed no limits on staffers' campaign activities." (Footnotes omitted; Pet. App., pp. 14a-15a).

During the Debate on Resolution 266, Senator Stennis pointed out that a proposal had been made not to let the staff members have anything to do with a Senator's reelection. "However, we unanimously opposed that on the simple ground that the staff is a necessary part of the operation and must work up the facts on which the Senator acts . . . So we totally ruled out the idea of prohibiting staff members from taking part in the campaigns for the nomination or renomination of Senators." 114 Cong. Rec. 6836, (1968).

And, in the same debate, Senator Stennis noted that there is "no prohibition on any staff member any time during a campaign. Their pay is not to be stopped . . . unless they . . . violate the rule about money, receiving or soliciting funds. . . ." 114 Cong. Rec. 6838 – 6839 (1968).

It was not until 1977[3] that the Senate next began to reconsider the role of staff in Senatorial campaigns. A Special Committee on Official Conduct reviewed the matter anew in its report issued on October 17, 1977, concluded that "other than the handling of campaign funds, the Senate has not imposed any restrictions on the participation of a member of a Senator's staff in that Senator's reelection campaign." S. Rep. No. 95-500, 95th Cong., 1st Sess., p. 2. (And see the summary of the court below, Pet. App., pp. 16a-21a).

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[3]The campaign involved in the complaint in this case was, of course, in 1976.

As noted by the court of appeals, the Committee announced in that report "its intention to study, as the second stage of its work, the role of staff members in political campaigns – a project in which the Committee presumably is still engaged." (Pet. App., p. 21a).

It is thus apparent that the Senate has been unwilling to restrict the use of staff in reelection campaigns, except as to receipt of political contributions. The legislative history of Senate Rule XLIII demonstrates the preposterous nature of the petitioners' underlying theory of this action and fully supports the conclusion of the court below in affirming the dismissal of petitioner's complaint.

## II

Petitioners next claim a conflict in the circuits by virtue of the decision of the court below in this case and that of the Seventh Circuit in *Shakman* v. *Democratic Organization of Cook County,* 435 F.2d 267 (1970).

*Shakman* accorded standing to an independent political candidate, and a supporter, to challenge alleged abuses of the patronage practice which utilized the incumbent party's position to coerce political support through threats of dismissal for failure to participate. *Shakman* was a 2-1 decision, with Judge Swygert dissenting on the ground of inappropriateness of judicial intervention.

Shakman is clearly distinguishable from the case at bar. It did not, of course, involve the False Claims Act. In addition, it "dealt with an identifiable system of abuses, involving a single county, not a coordinate branch of the federal government. Additionally, the district court, on remand, was aided by a consent judgment entered into by a number of the defendants. The district court left open, for

further developments, the remedy to be applied in Shakman." *Winpisinger* v. *Watson,* 628 F.2d 133, at 141 (C.A.D.C., 1980).

Aside from the foregoing distinguishing characteristics of *Shakman,* which turned on the issue of standing to sue, it is also noted that the district court in *Winpisinger* v. *Watson,* 86 F.R.D. 77 (D.C. D.C., 1981), pointed out that the Seventh Circuit's opinion in *Shakman* was implicitly modified by that Circuit's later opinion in *Mulqueeny* v. *National Commission on the Observance of International Women's Year,* 549 F.2d 1115 (7th Cir., 1977). In the latter case the Seventh Circuit, in application of later decisions of this Court on standing (e.g., *Duke Power Co.* v. *Carolina Env. Study Group,* 438 U.S. 59 (1978)), held that plaintiffs' failure to establish both injury in fact and the necessary causal connection deprived them of standing.

In any event, *Shakman* turned on standing while the case at bar turned on prudential considerations. The decision of the court below clearly creates no conflict in the Circuits.

## CONCLUSION

The decision of the court below affirming the dismissal of the complaint is not in conflict with any opinion of this Court or of another circuit court of appeals. The decision of the court below is clearly correct in its determination that the Senate itself has been indisposed to lay down guidelines on the use of Senatorial staff in reelection campaigns (except as to the receipt of contributions), and the matter is, in the circumstances, inappropriate for judicial scrutiny. There is no occasion for this Court to review the careful determination by the court below, and the petition for writ of certiorari should be denied.

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No. 80-2036

# In the Supreme Court of the United States

OCTOBER TERM, 1981

JOEL D. JOSEPH, PETITIONER

*v.*

HOWARD W. CANNON, ET AL.

*ON PETITION FOR A WRIT OF CERTIORARI TO THE UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA CIRCUIT*

## MEMORANDUM FOR THE UNITED STATES AS AMICUS CURIAE

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**MEMORANDUM FOR THE UNITED STATES AS AMICUS CURIAE**

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This memorandum is filed in response to the Court's invitation to the Solicitor General to express the views of the United States.

1. Petitioner brought this action against respondents Howard W. Cannon, a United States Senator, and Chester B. Sobsey, his administrative assistant, under the *qui tam* provision of the False Claims Act, ch. 67, 12 Stat. 696, Rev. Stat. 3490-3494 (1873-1874), as amended.[1] Petitioner's

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[1] The civil provisions of the False Claims Act have been codified at 31 U.S.C. 231 *et seq.*, but because Title 31 has not been enacted into positive law and the codified version differs from the Revised Statutes, we cite to the latter. See *United States* v. *Bornstein*, 423 U.S. 303, 305 n.1 (1976). The *qui tam* provision, Rev. Stat. 3491 (see 31 U.S.C. 232), provides that a private party may maintain a suit if he first discloses to the Attorney General the information on which his claim is based; the United States then has 60 days in which to take over the suit if it wishes. Petitioner complied with this requirement and the United States declined to enter the suit (Pet. App. 29a).

principal allegation is that Senator Cannon authorized the payment of Sobsey's federal salary during a time when Sobsey was working "extensively and exclusively" on the Senator's 1976 reelection campaign (Pet. App. 2a).[2]

The United States District Court for the District of Columbia dismissed petitioner's complaint, holding that because the information on which it was based was already in the possession of the government, a *qui tam* action was barred by Rev. Stat. 3491 (see 31 U.S.C. 232(C)). The court of appeals rejected this basis for dismissing the complaint, but it affirmed on the ground that, because there was "a complete absence 'of judicially discoverable and manageable standards for resolving' the question whether Senators may use paid staff members in their campaign activities" (Pet. App. 12a, quoting *Baker* v. *Carr*, 369 U.S. 186, 217 (1962)), upholding petitioner's claim would require the court "to venture far beyond the limits of acceptable judicial action" (Pet. App. 10a). The court accordingly concluded that it was required to "decline to read the Act as proscribing the particular conduct alleged in [petitioner's] complaint" (*ibid.*).

The court of appeals first noted that at the time of Senator Cannon's 1976 campaign, no Senate rule restricted Senate aides' participation in political campaigns; indeed, the Senate had deliberately chosen *not* to impose such

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[2]Petitioner also alleged that "the Senator's staff performed personal services for him and his family while collecting their governmental salaries" (Pet. App. 2a). The district court dismissed this claim on the ground that petitioner had "failed to state with particularity the circumstances of the fraud alleged" (Pet. App. 30a), as required by Fed. R. Civ. P. 9(b). The court of appeals affirmed, noting that although petitioner had ample opportunity "to remedy the deficiencies of the original pleading[,] [h]e made no effort to do so" and that on appeal petitioner gave no indication of how he might make his claim more specific (Pet. App. 27a). Petitioner appears not to challenge this aspect of the court of appeals' ruling.

Senator Cooper, a member of the committee that drafted Rule XLIII, similarly stated that the "question on how many employees are used in a campaign is one we cannot deal with now. It seems to address itself to the judgment and the sense of propriety of each Senat[or]" (Pet. App. 15a-16a n.60, quoting 114 Cong. Rec. 6839 (1968)).

Moreover, the court of appeals said that it could find no statute or administrative ruling that defined the extent to which a member of a Senator's staff could perform political duties (Pet. App. 12a-13a). The court also discussed at length the Senate's efforts since 1977 to deal with the question of employees who engaged in political activities while on the Senate payroll (*id.* at 16a-21a), and noted that the committee studying the matter reported that " '[o]ther than the actual handling of campaign funds, the Senate has not imposed any restrictions on the participation of a member of a Senator's staff in that Senator's reelection campaign' " (*id.* at 21a, quoting S. Rep. No. 95-500, 95th Cong., 1st Sess. 2 (1977)). In 1977 the Senate again declined to adopt a proposal to limit staff members' participation in political campaigns (Pet. App. 16a-18a).

For these reasons, the court of appeals determined that it could find "no 'manageable standards' for a court to apply when viewing staff participation in a Senate reelection campaign" (Pet. App. 22a, quoting *Baker* v. *Carr*, *supra*, 369 U.S. at 217). The court concluded (Pet. App. 22a, 24a):

> [T]he interpretation of the False Claims Act suggested by [petitioner] would license the courts to monitor every action taken by a Senator and his aide in an effort to determine whether it is sufficiently "official" or too "political." * * * [W]e are loathe to give the False Claims Act an interpretation that would require the judiciary to develop rules of behavior for the Legislative Branch. We are unwilling to conclude that Congress

> gave the courts a free hand to deal with so sensitive and controversial a problem, or invited them to assume the role of political overseer of the other branches of Government.

Therefore, the court held, petitioner had stated "no cause of action * * * under the [False Claims] Act" (*id.* at 24a).

2. The False Claims Act provides that it shall be unlawful to make a "false, fictitious, or fraudulent" claim against the United States.[3] See *United States ex rel. Brensilber* v. *Bausch & Lomb Optical Co.*, 131 F. 2d 545 (2d Cir. 1942), aff'd by an equally divided Court, 320 U.S. 711 (1943). If Sobsey's position were defined—by statute or perhaps by Senate rule or common understanding—in a way that excluded full-time participation in a political campaign, then respondents' claims for Sobsey's salary might be said to have implicitly represented that Sobsey was not working primarily on Senator Cannon's campaign, and petitioner's allegation might then state a *qui tam* cause of action under the False Claims Act. But petitioner has not established that Sobsey's position was defined in a way that precluded extensive campaign work. Consequently, even if petitioner's factual allegations are true, the claim for Sobsey's salary was not false or fraudulent.

As the court of appeals showed, the Senate, in drafting the rules that were in force in 1976, deliberately chose not to define the position in a way that excluded extensive campaign activities. The court of appeals also noted that the appropriations statutes under which Sobsey was paid provided simply for the " 'compensation of officers, employees,

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[3]The False Claims Act applies to false claims presented to Congress (see *United States* v. *Bramblett*, 348 U.S. 503, 509 (1955)), and actions have been successfully brought against members of Congress under the Act. See *ibid.*; *United States* v. *Eilberg*, 507 F. Supp. 267 (E.D. Pa. 1980); *United States ex rel. Hollander* v. *Clay*, 420 F. Supp. 853 (D.D.C. 1976).

[and] clerks to Senators' " (Pet. App. 13a, quoting Legislative Branch Appropriation Act, 1976, Pub. L. No. 94-59, 89 Stat. 269, and Legislative Branch Appropriation Act, 1975, Pub. L. No. 93-371, 88 Stat. 424). Presumably aides whose salaries are paid from this appropriation are to be compensated only for services performed in connection with a Senator's official functions, and not for purely personal services to the Senator. See generally 31 U.S.C. 628; 52 Comp. Gen. 504 (1973); 50 Comp. Gen. 534, 536 (1971). But it is difficult to distinguish between participating in a Senator's campaign and helping him to perform such legitimate official functions as serving constituents, ascertaining their views, and gathering information from them or explaining the Senator's positions to them. See *United States* v. *Brewster*, 408 U.S. 501, 512 (1972); S. Rep. No. 95-500, 95th Cong., 1st Sess. 4 (1977) ("[A] staff member's Senate duties * * * necessarily encompass political and representational responsibilities, as well as legislative, administrative, or clerical ones, and are often performed during irregular and unconventional work hours.").

If some independent standards existed for making the distinction between official activities and campaign activities, it might be possible to define the duties of a Senator's aide in a way that barred him from collecting a salary for engaging in campaign activities. But in the absence of any such standards, we doubt that Congress intended the courts to construct such a definition in the course of interpreting the False Claims Act or the statutes governing aides' salaries. Indeed, the history of the Senate's treatment of this problem suggests that the Senate did not want an aide's role to be subject to such limitations, except to the extent they were imposed by the individual Senator.[4]

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[4]Petitioner asserts (Pet. 11-12) that the decision below conflicts with *Shakman* v. *Democratic Organization of Cook County*, 435 F. 2d 267 (7th Cir. 1970). In that case the plaintiffs claimed that certain county

For these reasons, we believe that petitioner's complaint was properly dismissed, and we agree with much of the court of appeals' reasoning.[5] Especially in view of the

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and city officials violated the Constitution by "requir[ing] city and county employees, as a condition of holding their jobs * * * to furnish votes, campaign work, and money to elect candidates chosen by the regular [D]emocratic organization" (*id.* at 268). The Seventh Circuit rejected the argument that this claim presented a nonjusticiable political question (*id.* at 270-271).

*Shakman* is distinguishable from this case in at least two ways. First, it involved city and county officials, not the political activities of a coordinate branch of the federal government. See *Baker* v. *Carr*, *supra*, 369 U.S. at 217 (political question doctrine is "essentially a function of the separation of powers"). More important, although the decision of the court below was informed by principles concerning the proper role of federal courts, including principles underlying the political question doctrine, we believe that decision is properly understood not as a holding that petitioner's claim was nonjusticiable but as a determination that petitioner failed to state a claim under the False Claims Act. See generally Henkin, *Is There a "Political Question" Doctrine?*, 85 Yale L.J. 597 (1976). So understood, the decision below of course does not conflict with a holding that a somewhat related constitutional claim was justiciable.

[5]See page 7, note 4, *supra*. The court of appeals' conclusion was that "under the facts alleged in * * * [petitioner's] complaint no cause of action has been made out under the Act" (Pet. App. 24a). To the extent that the court of appeals' opinion suggests that a prohibition against Senate aides' engaging in campaign activities could never be enforced by a court, we believe the court went beyond what was necessary to decide this case. We see no reason to conclude at this point that it is in principle impossible to distinguish between activities related to a political campaign and other, official legislative activities; it is enough that no such distinction was reflected in the definition of respondent Sobsey's position. The Court has drawn a somewhat comparable distinction in interpreting the Speech or Debate Clause. See *United States* v. *Brewster*, *supra*, 408 U.S. at 512:

> It is well known, of course, that Members of the Congress engage in many activities other than the purely legislative activities protected by the Speech or Debate Clause. These include a wide range of legitimate "errands" performed for constituents, the making of appointments with Government agencies, assistance in

Senate's ongoing efforts to deal with the issue (see Pet. App. 21a), we see no reason for the Court to review the decision below.

It is therefore respectfully submitted that the petition for a writ of certiorari should be denied.

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securing Government contracts, preparing so-called "news letters" to constituents, news releases, and speeches delivered outside the Congress. * * * [T]hese * * * activities * * * are performed in part because they have come to be expected by constituents, and because they are a means of developing continuing support for future elections. Although these are entirely legitimate activities, they are political in nature rather than legislative, in the sense that term has been used by the Court in prior cases. But it has never been seriously contended that these political matters, however appropriate, have the protection afforded by the Speech or Debate Clause.